Freya Stark, who is always interesting and whose descriptions of native life and architecture are fascinating and picturesque. But even this intrepid traveller is inclined to stress the poetical side of her experiences, and to leave out the realities of smell and dirt. For dirty and smelly Arabia is.

The villages have no drainage or sanitation; garbage and offal are thrown on a heap outside the houses, or on the sea-shore, there to be removed in time by those voracious scavengers, the vultures and kites. It is a common experience to see the carcases of donkeys and other livestock lying on the shore, swollen and covered with flies, decaying under the hot sun. The stench within half a mile of an Arab village is simply appalling; one would be truthful if unkind to describe the Arab as having no prejudices against filth. In their persons the lower classes are extremely dirty by European standards, although they can scarcely be blamed for not taking baths, since water invariably has to be carried for several miles from the wells on the backs of donkeys and is, consequently, expensive. The Arab workers are very poorly paid, and prefer to spend their small earnings on food for their families, and the rare luxuries in which they indulge. The current belief that the Arabs 'wash' themselves in the sand is an anomaly. According to the Koran they are supposed to carry out a certain number of ablutions during the year, especially during the fast of Ramadan and the anniversary of the Prophet's death. As water is scarce, they obey the Holy Book by making a token ablution with sand. Anyone familiar with the grimy grey sand one finds in the vicinity of a village will realize that, used as a 'cleansing' agent, it probably contributes to the sores and skin infections from which so many of them suffer.

Another serious cause of infection are the flies, which breed in that climate on a scale to be observed nowhere else in the world. I have seen a plate of fresh dates carried a few yards from one room to another across an open courtyard. By the time it reached the second room it would be covered with a mass of flies at least two inches deep. Incredible to the insect-free European, this must be seen to be believed. Yet the Arab would not think of cleansing food that had been thus contaminated. He nonchalantly sweeps away the flies with his sleeve and proceeds to masticate the polluted mess with relish.

Apart from the piles of offal and refuse which are a feature of every village, another inducement to flies are the windowless shops

[Sharjah bazaar]

Chow. These narrow, twisting streets have changed little in the last four or five centuries, and a similar scene must have presented itself to Haroun al Raschid as, disguised as a beggar, he crept through the dark thoroughfares of Baghdad. When I was in Sharjah I read that his palace had been excavated, but the Arabs with whom I discussed this interesting piece of archæology were not interested. They have a superstitious dislike of Haroun, and do not like to talk about the *Arabian Nights*, though I could never discover the reason for this.

The tailors make up most of the Arab *abbas* and *kufieyhs* from imported cloth of Indian manufacture; before the war a great deal of woollen and cotton fabrics came from Manchester, but it will probably be some time before the English piece-goods market is extended to Arabia again. We examined their wares; Indian-made shirts imported from Karachi, soft, woollen Kashmir shawls with hand-embroidered designs of birds and flowers in glowing colours; rich silks, sarongs and turbans, and large bales of coloured cloth for Arab children.

The streets are always congested at this hour. Not only Arabs, but goats and donkeys, throng the narrow ways, so that one continually brushes shoulders with the crowd and cannot avoid its inescapable stench. The peasant women seem dirtier than the men; this is presumably because their black cotton garments do not show the dirt, and are therefore seldom washed. Many of the younger women walked about unveiled and, in spite of their belladonna-stained eyes and henna-red lips, some of them were astonishingly lovely. They gave us coquettish glances as we passed, but even the most amorously-inclined Westerner would lose his ardour if he inhaled the nauseating odour of their persons.

Before we left Sharjah, Hassan suggested that we should take a cup of Turkish tea, so we sauntered into an open-air tea shop and sat on hard benches polished by much use. A handsome young Arab brought us tall, narrow glasses containing very sweet, warm tea, unclouded by milk; it was very aromatic and agreeable. The benches were arranged in a square, in the centre of which were stalls displaying cakes and sweetmeats, a large urn, and the inevitable gramophone. An old Arab sat smoking his hubble-bubble and changing the records; in return for this service he was supplied by the proprietor with free tea. The words of the songs, which Hassan translated for our benefit, were mostly concerned with the plaintive laments of unsuccessful lovers, suggesting that the crooner's

high degree of resistance as the result of repeated exposure to infection. Enteritis and diarrhea are responsible for a high mortality in infancy and early childhood.

Many persons harbor at least one species of intestinal worms. Occasional cases of tapeworm infection have been recorded, but the species was not specified. Ancylostomiasis and schistosomiasis are not known to occur.

Diseases Spread Chiefly Through the Respiratory Tract

Tuberculosis is a major problem, and, as elsewhere, the poor nutrition, the overcrowded living quarters and the unhygienic habits of the people favor the spread of the infection. Pulmonary tuberculosis apparently predominates, but other forms of the disease are frequent.

Pneumonia and influenza are prominent, especially during the winter months, when the palm thatch huts provide slight protection against the changeable weather conditions. Respiratory infections are regarded as an occupational hazard among the pearling crews.

Epidemics of smallpox are recurrent, and a large percentage of the children show pockmarks indicative of previous infection. Measles, mumps, chickenpox and other respiratory diseases of childhood are endemic.

Diseases Spread or Contracted Chiefly Through Contact

Gonorrhea is widespread, and serious complications due to local methods of treatment are said to be numerous. Syphilis is common, but the extent of infection is uncertain. Cases of soft chancre also are reported.

Trachoma is one of the most frequent diseases in this area, affecting a large percentage of the population. Trichiasis, corneal ulcers and other serious manifestations of the infection are often seen. Conjunctivitis is general: many cases probably are infectious in origin, and all undoubtedly are aggravated by the sand-laden winds.